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6 October 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: McNamara Pacification Reorganization Proposal Activity

SUMMARY

(1) The President has apparently bought the rationale behind the McNamara pacification reorganization proposal and presently feels that the burden of proof is on its opponents to come up with something better. No firm decisions, however, have yet been taken.

(2) AID (Mr. Poats), State (Ambassador Unger) and Ambassador Porter are all strongly opposed to the proposal but not sure how to proceed in fighting it or what to offer in the way of an alternative.

(3) AID's counter proposal (copy attached) is not likely to carry the day. As of now (6 October) it looks as if the final decision will not be made until the McNamara party (including Messrs. Komer, Katzenbach and Porter) has returned to Washington after reviewing the bidding with Ambassador Lodge and his colleagues.

(4) In discussing this whole affair, Ambassador Porter had high praise for Mr. Hart and the Saigon Station.

1. On Wednesday, 5 October, I spent several hours with Ambassador Unger, Ambassador Porter and, intermittently, AID Assistant Administrator Poats, going over the McNamara proposal in all its aspects and ramifications. For essentially similar reasons AID (Poats) and State (Unger) and Ambassador Porter are all opposed to the proposal but uncertain about how to proceed in fighting it or what to offer in the way of an alternative.

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2. Ambassador Unger felt that someone (Mr. Komer, Secretary McNamara, or both) had already gotten to the President and sold him on the thesis that pacification was not working, drastic U.S. organizational rationalization and surgery was required, the U.S. military alone "had the horses" to do what was needed, hence the U.S. military should be given command authority and told to do the job. According to Ambassador Unger, the President was strongly inclined to endorse the McNamara proposal. He had listened to counter arguments (from Secretary Rusk) but was not persuaded and felt the burden of proof was on the dissenters, who should fall in line unless they could soon come up with a better alternative. In any event, the President wanted a decision made in principle before the McNamara party left for Saigon on 8 October. A White House meeting was tentatively scheduled for the morning of 8 October to review the bidding and come up with a decision. Ambassador Lodge would be consulted but, in effect, after the basic decision had already been made.

3. Ambassador Porter objected strongly to the McNamara proposal itself and to the mode of procedure outlined above. He felt:

a. It was inaccurate to say that pacification was not going well and unrealistic to have expected spectacular, measurable results in the eight months since Honolulu. Pacification involves rebuilding the whole structure of South Vietnamese society, a task that could not possibly be accomplished in a short span of time.

b. No organizational structure is perfect. The current U.S. pacification organization could be improved; but scrapping it to set up a new one would inevitably check the momentum now building up. It would take us another eight months of shakedown to get back to where we are today.

c. Putting a military cast on the U.S. pacification effort would work against the major U.S. political objective of trying to civilianize the GVN and would seriously complicate our political problems within South Vietnam.

d. Past experience (CIDG/SWITCHBACK, the Saigon port) does not indicate that civil programs are likely to improve if the U.S. military takes them over. For years the U.S. military has had all the command authority it needs to address itself to the crucial problem of rural security, which is far from being solved. This is hardly an argument for giving it more authority and assigning it additional tasks.

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Rural development, especially its associated cadre program, is not a military activity and its essential spirit would be lost if it became a military activity.

e. Above all, a major reorganization of the U. S. Mission should not be decided on until Ambassador Lodge and his immediate colleagues have had a chance to examine the proposal and express their views on it. If the McNamara proposal were presented as a virtual fait accompli, Ambassador Porter felt Lodge's reaction was likely to be pyrotechnic and he would probably resign.

4. Mr. Komer called during our discussion and told Ambassador Porter the final decision would not be made until Ambassador Lodge had been properly consulted, though Porter had serious reservations about the value of these assurances. Komer also said the tentatively scheduled Saturday morning (8 October) White House meeting would not focus on reorganization of pacification but would be a general review of the bidding in Vietnam. Even after this call, Porter was not sure whether he was to attend the Saturday morning meeting, but understood that he was to accompany McNamara to Saigon.

5. Ambassador Porter mentioned that the essence of the McNamara proposal had been surfaced by Mr. Komer in an informal letter sent to Saigon last summer. Mr. Komer's letter had stressed, however, that it was not an official proposal for the U. S. Mission to study but only an informal note designed to give Lodge and Porter the flavor of "some ideas circulating around town" (i. e., Washington). Unger felt that Komer might cite the letter as evidence that Lodge had in fact been consulted already on the reorganization proposal. (Unger later told me privately that it seemed to him that Lodge and Porter had apparently ignored Komer's letter, hoping the ideas expressed therein would die quietly. It was obvious that they had not done so.) Porter also said that Lodge plans to return to the U. S. in November on leave and to remain at least through December. If the U. S. pacification effort should be reorganized, Porter would be in charge during the transition period.

6. The only piece of paper that emerged from our 6 October conversations was the attached AID memorandum to McNamara, drafted by Poats and signed by Mr. Gaud. Ambassadors Porter and Unger felt it was a weak lance with which to do battle and that AID's proposed "alternative" was not a satisfactory answer to the problem. (I agree.) They also felt that the best alternative lay in using the present structure (i. e., a civilian pacification director reporting directly to the Ambassador) but giving the pacification director a stronger personal staff and more direct

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command authority over pacification programs at regional and provincial levels. (In essence, this is the approach suggested in our 28 September memorandum to you.) I took the line that the Agency would be willing to turn the RD program over to such a structure (i.e., the assets and responsibilities of the Station's Cadre Operations Division) provided suitable arrangements could be made to relieve the Agency of the responsibility for funding this program and supporting it logistically. I also indicated that we would not be willing to turn over control of our intelligence collection activities at regional and provincial levels [redacted] 25X1 [redacted], but would be willing to detail an officer to the regional and provincial pacification directors to serve as their intelligence advisor and ensure that their requirements were serviced efficiently and promptly.

7. The real problem remains that of integrating U.S. military assets into the pacification director's command channel, in particular giving him some effective control over the activities of U.S. military advisors to Popular Forces, Regional Forces and ARVN units assigned to pacification duties. Neither Porter nor Unger had an answer for this one that they felt the military would buy. Both were inclined to the notion of giving the pacification director a military deputy (two or three star) who could service his military requirements but could still, somehow, remain subordinate to COMUSMACV's overall authority. (One solution might be to double-hat such an officer as COMUSMACV's deputy for pacification operations and as the pacification director's military deputy. This was the suggestion Unger planned to make to Mr. Katzenbach, who was to be briefed on the whole affair later in the afternoon of 5 October.)

8. As of now, all that can be said with assurance about the pacification reorganization proposal is that no firm decision has been made and there will almost certainly be more thrashing about before one is taken. It now appears that the final decision will not be made until after the McNamara party (which will include Messrs. Komer, Katzenbach and Porter) has visited Saigon and reviewed the bidding with Ambassador Lodge.

9. During the discussion outlined above, Ambassador Porter spoke several times in glowing terms about the Saigon Station and Mr. Hart. He had high praise for the Station's performance and warm appreciation for the support and wholehearted cooperation he received from Mr. Hart.

[redacted]
George A. Carver, Jr.

Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

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